

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

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WASHINGTON - Please join us for an on-the-record briefing with one of the leading human rights advocates in Russia, Ms. Ludmila Mikhailovna Alekseeva. Ms. Alekseeva will discuss the growing concerns regarding human rights and religious freedom issues in Russia.

Ms. Alekseeva was one of the leading Russian dissidents during the Cold War and is the current chairman of the Moscow Helsinki Group, the oldest and one of the most influential human rights organizations in Russia. Ms. Alekseeva is a 2004 recipient of the prestigious Democracy Award, presented annually by the Board of Directors of the National Endowment for Democracy to recognize the courageous and creative work of individuals and organizations that has advanced the cause of human rights and democracy around the world.

**WHO:** Ludmila Mikhailovna Alekseeva

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 3, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

800 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 790

Washington, DC

Ludmila Alekseeva, a founder of the Moscow Helsinki Group in 1976, is one of the most prominent human rights advocates in Russia today. She graduated from the history faculty of Moscow State University in 1950 and later became involved in efforts to assist Soviet political prisoners. In 1976, she joined Russian physicist Yuri Orlov and other prominent Soviet dissidents in forming the Moscow Helsinki Group. After Orlov was arrested in 1977, Ludmila played a key role in the group in publicizing human rights abuses in the USSR, along with Natan Shcharansky and others. The Soviet government offered Ms. Alekseeva the choice of exile or prison; Ludmila lived for over a decade in the United States where she published a comprehensive study on Soviet dissent. She returned to live in Russia in 1993 and continued her work with the Moscow Helsinki Group. In 1996, she became chairman of the Moscow Helsinki Group and was elected president of the International Helsinki Federation in 1998. Last year, in recognition of her human rights leadership, Ludmila Alekseeva received awards from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy and the Olof Palme Foundation in Sweden.

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**The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Preeta D. Bansal  
- Felice D. Gaer